

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, CA
SUBJECT: CIVIL SERVANTS BLOCK ENTRY TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

1. THE PQ GOVERNMENT YESTERDAY (JUNE 15) GOT A TASTE OF THE LABOR STRIFE THAT BEDEVILED THE PRECEDING BOURASSA REGIME IN THE EARLY 70'S AND THERE IS MORE IN STORE FOR TODAY. ABOUT 200 MILITANTS FROM THE CIVIL SERVICE UNION BLOCKED ACCESS TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUILDING FOR ABOUT FOUR HOURS YESTERDAY BEFORE DISPERSING PEACEFULLY. IT WAS THE FIRST TIME IN QUEBEC'S HISTORY THAT NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MEMBERS HAD BEEN PREVENTED FROM MEETING IN THE PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENT. ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT CLEMENT RICHARD ADJOURNED PROCEEDINGS AT 10:00 YESTERDAY MORNING FOR LACK OF A QUORUM, SINCE LESS THAN A DOZEN MEMBERS HAD CROSSED THE PICKET LINES. RICHARD HIMSELF, FORMERLY A LABOR UNION LAWYER FOR THE CNTU, HEARD OF THE IMPENDING DEMONSTRATION THE PREVIOUS EVENING AND SPENT THE NIGHT IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUILDING IN ORDER TO AVOID HAVING TO CROSS THE LINES. PRIME MINISTER RENE LEVESQUE AND ACTING PARLIAMENTARY LEADER CLAUDE CHARRON HAD THE UNPLEASANT (AND UNUSUAL, FOR THEM) EXPERIENCE OF BEING SOUNDLY BOOED BY THE DEMONSTRATORS WHEN THEY CROSSED THE LINES
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UNDER POLICE ESCORT LATER IN THE MORNING.

2. WHEN PROCEEDINGS RESUMED YESTERDAY AFTERNOON, LEVESQUE ADMITTED TO THE ASSEMBLY THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD "MISCALCULATED" IN NOT ADEQUATELY PREPARING FOR THE DEMONSTRATION AND VOWED THAT IT WOULD NOT HAPPEN AGAIN. JUSTICE MINISTER MARC ANDRE

BEDARD, WHO HAD PERHAPS BEEN DISTRACTED FROM HIS REGULAR DUTIES BY HIS WORK ON THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE CONSIDERING THE REFERENDUM BILL, ADMITTED THAT HIS OFFICE HAD MADE "AN ERROR OF JUDGEMENT" IN NOT ENSURING THAT SUFFICIENT POLICE WERE ON HAND TO ENSURE THAT ASSEMBLY MEMBERS COULD REACH THEIR DESKS UNIMPEDED. TO ADD TO THE HUMILIATION, THE GOVERNMENT THEN APPROVED AN OPPOSITION MOTION OF CENSURE FOR HAVING FAILED TO TAKE ADEQUATE PREVENTIVE MEASURES/

3. THE CIVIL SERVICE UNIONS HAVE BEEN PROTESTING AGAINST BILL 50, BRANCHCHILD OF CIVIL SERVICE MINISTER DENIS DE BELLEVAL, WHICH WAS INTRODUCED IN LAST YEAR'S NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSION AS BILL 53 BUT WAS NOT VOTED ON BEFORE THE END OF THE SESSION. THE BILL, WHICH GAVE THE GOVERNMENT FA R GREATER FREEDOM IN HIRING, FIRING, AND TRANSFERRING CIVIL SERVANTS, CAUSED A FUROR IN THE UNIONS LAST YEAR. THIS YEAR'S VERSION HAS BEEN SLIGHTLY MODIFIED TO MEET UNION OBJECTIONS BUT THE GOVERNMENT IS STANDING BY A PROVISION WHICH WOULD TAKE AWAY FROM THE UNIONS THE POWER TO NEGOTIATE JOB CLASSIFICATION WITH MANAGEMENT. IT IS THIS PROVISION, ABOVE ALL, TO WHICH THE UNIONS ARE NOW OBJECTING. THIS MORNING PICKETS WENT UP OUTSIDE OF ALL GOVERNMENT OFFICES , MOST GOVERNMENT CIVIL SERVANTS HAVE ABSENTED THEMSELVES FROM THEIR WORK IN RESPONSE TO A CALL FOR A ONE DAY STRIKE BY UNION LEADERS, AND A NEW DEMONSTRATION IS SET TO TAKE PLACE IN FRONT OF TH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AT NOON. TO ADD TO THE GOVERNMENT'S TROUBLES, ANOTHER MAJOR DEMONSTRATION IS DUE TO TAKE PLACE IN FRON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF THE PARLIAMENT THIS EVENING, THIS TIME BY SOME 1500 MEMBERS OF THE CNTU PROTESTIN G THE IMPRISONMENT OF FOUR UNION LEADERS IN MONTREAL (SEE MONTREAL 1177)

4. COMMENT: AS WE HAVE MENTIONED EARLIER (QUEBEC 205 AND 158) THE NEXT TWELVE MONTHS MAY SEE MORE DRAMATIC CONFRONTATIONS BETWEEN THE PQ GOVERNMENT AND QUEBEC'S UNIONS. AS ONE JOURNALIST OBSERVED THIS MORNING, "THE PQ'S HONEY MOON IS OVER, AS FAR AS LABOR IS CONCERNED." IF YESTERDAYS'S INCIDENT, WHICH MAY BE AGGRAVATED TODAY, IS ANY INDICATION, THE PQ IS IN FOR A TOUGH TIME WITH THE FAR MORE DIFFICULT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PUBLIC AND PARA-PUBLIC WORKERS, NOTABLY HOSPITAL WORKERS AND TEACHERS, WHOSE CONTRACTS EXPIRE NEXT SPRING AT JUST ABOUT THE SAME TIME THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS EXPECTED TO LAUNCH THE CRUCIAL REFERENDUM CAMPAIGN. MCNAMARA

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